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The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is being issued without formal editing.

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Statement

We present our recommendations for the debate in two strands:

(a) social technology successfully adopted in our work with vulnerable populations; and

(b) proposals compiled from multiple public consultations carried out in South American countries.

Educating and providing people with the tools they need for sustainable development: the key to the success of the post-2015 agenda.

The recommendations set out here directly contribute to reaching one of the goals proposed by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. Over the last few years we have sent to the United Nations proposals that can also be applied to this goal, and we believe that if this goal is achieved then it will create a positive chain reaction for the other development objectives: "By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development".

We propose that this approach be incorporated in a concrete way within different public policies, particularly in schools and social development programs. We know that measures like these, even though they are always considered praiseworthy, are sometimes underestimated in the role of fighting poverty and promoting sustainability. Our experience shows, however, that they are the most effective ones, because they reach the heart of the problem.

A great part of the development models and responses to financial, social, and environmental crises are still excessively centered on the economic aspect rather than on the well-being of individuals, who should be considered in all aspects. As a result, our societies, even some of the richest, produce unhappy people and, ultimately, sick people. The high rates of depression are evidence of this phenomenon. Depression used to be considered an illness characteristic of rich countries, but today it is the one that is most prevalent among women from high-, middle- and low-income countries. The World Health Organization estimates that by 2030 depression will become the most common disease in the world.

Given this situation, renowned specialists emphasized the need to act on the "social determinants" of mental health. Even poverty reduction programs must be analysed in light of the impact they might have on the psychiatric well-being of their target public. After all, anxiety disorders, chronic stress, and depression have been transformed into a global epidemic and are aggravated by other social ills, among them the increase in violence (real and perceived). Since these processes are self-perpetuating, the prognosis for them cause considerable concern. This is why it is increasingly urgent to act on the causes that are at the heart of these issues, as the following extract indicates: "Everyone is deeply concerned with the savagery that dominates the Earth, in search of a solution to reduce, at the very least, the violence that has left the hidden places, the dark early hours, and has gone out onto our streets and into our homes, because it has invaded people's minds. There is today,

however, a growing understanding that if there is violence, it is not just a problem for governments and police organizations in particular, but it is a challenge for all of us in society. If it has left the dark night and showed itself to us in the light of day it is because it inhabits the innermost part of human beings. If it exists in the souls and in the hearts, it will be present wherever human beings may be. Therefore, it is in the hearts and souls of individuals that it must first be fought against.

Fighting against the various forms of violence that affect individuals in their innermost being goes far beyond providing them with access to resources and basic services. It also means strengthening their resilience and preventing family and community ties from being weakened. As a result, we have managed to interrupt the process of social degradation that many families experience, by offering them the conditions necessary for them to reorganize themselves and reassume their role in the community.

This result does not happen by chance. There are solid scientific evidences correlating health/well-being and happiness, happiness and spirituality, and this is present in the work we do. A series of research studies demonstrate a relationship between spirituality and lower rates of stress and depression, greater levels of happiness, positive emotions, civic ideas, healthy behaviour, longevity, and even cognitive capacity.

We have systematized the experience of allying social and educational actions with spiritual, ethical, and ecumenical — that is universal — values in the most diverse social and cultural contexts. In doing so, we have produced a replicable and innovative social technology. Dozens of pieces of academic research, whose object of study is our social and educational work, have already been concluded or are currently on-going. Below are the main strands of our work:

(a) Structured social and educational programs — We currently have 30 main programs, which are developed by our multidisciplinary teams. These programs involve hundreds of workshops and projects. They are aimed at pregnant women, early childhood, children and teenagers, youth and adults, people who live on the streets, the elderly, the elderly who have been separated from their family nucleus, community leaders, and professionals from civil society organizations. The programs have several objectives, among which are productive social inclusion, food safety, social protection, the strengthening of family and community ties, improvements in health indicators, and advocacy.

(b) Educational proposal and work methodology — The book É Urgente Reeducar! [It is Urgent to Re-educate!] contains the principles of our teaching method, which have been widely talked about since the 1980s in lectures and in the press by educator Paiva Netto. In 2000, we presented the main aspects of this message to the UN in various languages. Another publication, Educação com Espiritualidade Ecumênica — Manual da Pedagogia do Afeto e da Pedagogia do Cidadão Ecumênico [Education with Ecumenical Spirituality — the Pedagogy of Affection and the Ecumenical Citizen Pedagogy Manual] presents the practical reference points of the MAPREI (Learning Method through Rational-Emotional-Intuitive Research), which was developed by our educators based on our teaching line.

(c) Culture of Peace and Ecumenical Citizenship — We have created a curricular proposal for our social and educational programs that values self-

knowledge, Spirituality, protagonism, and respect for religious and philosophical pluralism. At the beginning of each activity we encourage meditation and/or prayer. The projects reinforce solidary and sustainable behaviour.

(d) Social communication and education — We constantly produce content for radio, television, and the Internet on education, citizenship, human rights, social work, sustainability, complete health, and other topics, which are all in line with our curricular proposal. We supply our teachers and social workers with instructional materials directed towards their constant improvement, and it is made available to the general public.

(e) Meetings and workshops — Held periodically in the countries where we operate, they count on specialists in the topics being developed and on our professionals who act as the multipliers of our practices. These events are aimed at schools, universities, civil society organizations, trade unions, boards of education, and other social actors. The main event we hold is our International Education Congress, which started at the beginning of the 1990s and is in its 14th edition. It has taken place in cities like São Paulo (Brazil) and Porto (Portugal).

These strands help produce "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being", which defines health, as established in the Constitution of the World Health Organization. This definition is much wider than the mere absence of illness or infirmity and it is in line with our approach to social problems which aims to modify their deep-rooted causes, as the following extract suggests: "It is not enough to consider citizens just in their physical context. They have to be considered also in their spiritual context, because any component of human group is, in short, formed by body and Soul. After all, we are Spirit by origin. This is the complete meaning of citizenship.

The many voices of Latin America

Also with the objective of contributing to the debate on the post-2015 development agenda, we held the 11th Solidary Society Network Multi-stakeholder Forum — 7th Innovation Fair, in support of the Council's Annual Ministerial Review. In October and November of 2014, the capital cities of Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay hosted meetings between representatives from civil society organizations, universities, companies, governments, and UN entities; the topic on the agenda was "Sustainable Citizen Education". Representing the United Nations system were the Information Centers, the Food and Agriculture Organization, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Associated Schools. In the event, which was supported by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, participants drew attention to the need for governments to:

(a) implement educational initiatives on sustainability aimed at various population groups (age-related, region-related, etc.) based on research. This should be done in order to foster sustainable lifestyles, in other words, the adoption of daily practices of conscious consumption, recycling, composting, shared use of resources, saving resources, among others;

(b) create or consolidate mechanisms for citizens to become mobilized and demand actions from government in several areas, such as education and sustainability;

(c) provide support for educational institutions (early childhood, primary, secondary education; university; open courses) so that they can adapt their own curricula in order to develop sustainability content and practices. To do so, they must train their teams and supply them with the tools that enable them to use attractive and diversified strategies that involve not only the students, but also their families and the community;

(d) encourage schools to periodically coordinate educational activities on sustainability in the green areas in their neighbourhoods. Adults living in the region would also participate in order to encourage the community to become engaged in conserving these areas;

(e) create or strengthen educational programs aimed at youth who are not attending regular schools. These programs must be adapted to meet the needs of these young people in order to overcome basic educational deficiencies and assist their entry to the formal labour market.

In Paraguay, our Solidary Society Network Multi-stakeholder Forum also focused on the subtopic "Sustainable Agriculture", which recommendations can be found in the Good Will magazine.